

he should tell her. Her incredulous anger he foresaw; and her anxiety—the anxiety of the woman unversed in legal matters. He damned Hammond in his heart; and pulled out his evening paper. There it was, in all the shamelessness of the flaring headline: "A Leading Citizen Indicted!" and so on. The big black letters were like a blow in the face. Fleming felt that every commuter on the train was looking over the top of his newspaper at him. And he had to tell Amy! The fact was Thomas Fleming had no experience in disgrace and did not know how to conduct himself. When he swung off onto the platform and plodded slowly up the lane to his own house, it seemed to him as though his very feet hung back! When his foot touched the lowest step of the porch, the door opened wide and Amy stood there.

"Go right into the house! You'll take cold," he commanded.

But she drew him inside with eager welcome. "Why, how did you manage to get the 5 o'clock. I heard the gate shut and could hardly believe my ears!" She possessed herself of one of his hands, so he had to dive as best he could with the other, to fish out her candy. She took it, with gay pretense of scolding, and then checked herself.

"You look tired, Tom. When you've had your dinner you'll feel better."

"Ah, Amy—"

"Yes? Tell me; I knew you hadn't had a good day."

When he had told her, she sat dumb before him. Her face was white and her eyes terror stricken. But that was only for the first moment. Almost instantly there was the relief of anger. She stood up, her delicate face red, her voice strained.

"To accuse you! YOU!"

It was just what Bates had said. The first thought everywhere would be of the absurdity of such a charge against Thomas Fleming.

"It's blackmail," Amy said, trembling.

"Of course, we shall have no difficulty in throwing them down," he said. "They bring their case, really, on Smith's old check to me for \$17,400."

"I don't understand?" Amy said. It had always been a joke between them that Amy did not know anything about business, so she tried to smile when she asked him to explain.

"Oh," he said, impatiently, "it's simple enough. Smith owed me \$3,000—a personal matter. I once sold him some stock; he gave me his note; had to renew two or three times; thing sort of hung fire. You wouldn't understand it, Amy. But when he bought this Hammond property for \$14,400 he made out the check for \$17,400—he'd had a windfall, so he could pay me what he owed me. See? I got my money. Understand?"

"Perfectly," she said; "what a rascal Hammond is!"

Her husband was silent. Amy's knees were shaking under her. "Oh, I could kill that man, I could kill him!"

Well as he knew her, he looked at her with astonishment—this mild creature to speak with such deadly, vindictive passion! She came and knelt down beside him; he felt her heart pounding in her side.

She kissed him, silently; and went back to her seat.

"Don't let's talk about it, dearest, any more tonight. It's only on the surface; it isn't a real trouble."

He nodded, gratefully; and they did not speak of it again.

But that night Amy Fleming, lying motionless in her bed, stared into the darkness until the glimmering oblong of the window told her that dawn had come.

"Trouble shows us our friends," Amy said, smiling. And indeed it did, in the Flemings' case. When the news of the indictment of Thomas Fleming fell upon his community,